



## Feature

## Two Major Legal Researching Tools Compared

By Anayat Durrani

**In the world of legal researching, Lexis-Nexis and Thomson West reign supreme. Both companies offer a wide range of services to lawyers, paralegals, and legal librarians.**

Thomson West is headquartered in Eagan, MN, and prides itself as "a provider of integrated information solutions to the U.S. legal market." In the business since 1870, the company functions within The Thomson Corporation as a result of a merger between West Publishing and Thomson Legal Publishing back in June 1996. Their flagship product is Westlaw, an online legal research service that is available on the Internet and through their proprietary software WestMate.

Headquartered in Dayton, OH, LexisNexis provides "comprehensive and authoritative legal, news, and business information and tailored applications." Apart from its flagship Web-based Lexis® and Nexis® research services, the company boasts some of the top legal publishers such as Martindale-Hubbell, Matthew Bender, Butterworths, JurisClasseur, Abeledo-Perrot and Orac.

In the business of legal researching, these two companies are going head to head to provide the ultimate in legal services to their customers. West and Lexis-Nexis offer a range of tools and services to meet the growing demands of their customers.

"Both electronic and print materials are central to the academic and practicing legal professions," said Gail Partin, Law Librarian at the Sheely-Lee Law Library at the Dickinson School of Law of the Pennsylvania State University. "One cannot state a legal theory or proposition without some authority to back it up...such as case law, statutes, regulations, constitutions...so the major print and electronic tools are used heavily."

Ms. Partin said that legal researchers expect the tools available to be reliable, accurate, current, and cost effective, and they must meet the needs of their customers or may find themselves out of the market. "There is no room in the legal research marketplace for inferior, inaccurate products because good lawyering depends on good research," Ms. Partin said.

Lexis and Westlaw are the most popular resources for legal

research. "Westlaw contains nearly 20,000 databases of information that range from the entire body of U.S. case law, including briefs and related court documents to state and federal codes, regulations and statutes to business information, news, and public records to more than 4,000 treatises, analyzing and contextualizing the above-stated information sets," said Maurine DeRoy-Everett, Thomson Legal & Regulatory North American Legal/West. "It is a comprehensive collection that meets nearly every research need of any legal professional."

Integrated with Westlaw are tools like KeyCite, a citator service that can determine whether cases used in an argument are still good law. StatutesPlus is a statute-searching tool that helps find, verify, read and interpret statutes and determine if one's research is complete and thorough. Westlaw tools also include ResultsPlus, WestClip, and others that assist legal professionals with their research.

Ms. DeRoy-Everett said lawyers and law firms can use Westlaw for all of their research needs, which can all be done in one location. She said a lawyer in any practice area, jurisdiction, or segment can benefit from the content sets and the tools, adding that different content sets are used for different tasks. "For example, a corporate attorney in New York City conducting due diligence on a potential acquisition will find the business news and information critical to his/her success. While a family law solo practitioner in Madison, WI, will benefit from the Wisconsin annotated statutes and practice series."

Beyond Westlaw and online legal research, West also owns Thomson FindLaw, which provides free legal information, as well as Thomson Elite, a leading provider of integrated practice and financial management systems for professional service firms worldwide. The company also provides online continuing legal education (CLE) services through the West LegalEdcenter portal.



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Then there is Lexis-Nexis, which starting in 1973 with its Lexis service and has catapulted as a major force in the \$5.7-billion legal publishing market. Published under the LexisNexis and Michie names are the complete federal and state case law and statutes, including the U.S. Code Service, and other primary law content; online annotated codes in 48 states; millions of headnotes, and case law summaries written by LexisNexis lawyer editors; LexisNexis CourtLink docket information and Strategic Profiles. Their legal content will also include secondary content from Matthew Bender, CCH and BNA; SmartLinx reports; Martindale-Hubbell directories; and Shepard's citation services.

"LexisNexis uniquely understands attorney workflow and has developed unique applications like LexisNexis Total Search and LexisNexis TimeMatters. Both integrate legal research into workflow tasks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the attorney," said Jeffrey S. Pfeifer, Sr. Vice President and Publisher, LexisNexis Large Law Firm Market. "In the case of Total Search, our solution integrates firm work product and LexisNexis content into a powerful, unified answer set. TimeMatters integrates legal research seamlessly into the case-management process to streamline client file development, billing and matter tracking.

LexisNexis also has File & Serve, an Internet-based service that allows law firms to electronically file legal documents directly with courts and serve documents among litigants at any hour or time of day. More than 50,000 attorneys, law firm staff, judges, and clerks have registered with LexisNexis File & Serve systems across the country.

There is also Courtlink, a new service for online retrieval of court docket information that is available to law firm, corporate, and government legal professionals. Customers of the LexisNexis CourtLink services include the largest 250 law firms in the United States, as well as leading banks, insurance companies, and media companies.

And beyond legal research, Lexis-Nexis has focused on

helping lawyers grow their practices through such services as Billing Matters to electronic discovery services and automated document preparation through Hot Docs. LexisNexis Market Intelligence is a recent addition to Lexis-Nexis and will assist law firm marketers in monitoring litigation trends, evaluating growth opportunities with clients and prospects, and for determining current share of clients' work.

"I think that online research databases such as those offered by Lexis-Nexis and West are very important to today's practice of law, but they do not provide the complete picture," said Tina Dumas, Reference Librarian for Nixon Peabody LLP in San Francisco and President of the Northern California Association of Law Librarians. "There are still some materials that are not available online, and researchers need to be aware of what they might be missing."

Ms. Dumas said she has used a number of research tools in her 11 years working in three different law firms, but that Lexis and Westlaw seem to be the largest, with the broadest range of resources available. She currently uses both Lexis-Nexis and West but admits that neither resource has all the materials she may need for a particular research project. She said that each database vendor has particular specialties or features that are appropriate to the moment.

"Lexis has a feature that tells you how many of your search terms are in each document, while Westlaw can weed out duplicate news articles from your search results . West, logically, has a lot of their own treatises available, while Lexis has a number of Matthew Bender treatises. Both keep track of the searches you have already done in a day, which is helpful if you need to follow up on earlier research," said Ms. Dumas. "So, I like them both, but for different reasons, specifically, which resources they have, and which features I need for a particular project."

Both West and Lexis-Nexis continue to develop and improve their research tools to meet the needs of their customers.



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“There are certainly benefits to these large, online databases, though. While we have not attained the “virtual office” that some people predicted, I think we are as close as we are

going to get—and we are still producing a lot of paper,” said Dumas.

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